

Jones Rehearsed Cultists in Mass

By Larry Kramer
Washington Post Staff Writer

Ultimately, when they could do no more for their leader, the followers of the Rev. Jim Jones did just what he had programmed them to do — they died for his brand of socialism.

Throughout the 15-year-history of the Peoples Temple, Jones constantly used fear of violent death or persecution as a tool to mold his band of ex-convicts, drug addicts, misfits and lost souls into a cohesive, almost military, congregation.

"Suicide was ingrained in his philosophy," one former cult member said yesterday. Everyone who joined Peoples Temple not only entered into a suicide pact, but frequently rehearsed the morbid act with Jones.

A master manipulator, Jones fre-

quently used public beatings and pep talks to impress his followers with his contention that the United States was on the verge of a fascist takeover and antiblack race war.

When he took some 1,200 followers to the jungle of Guyana in South America, he told them they were entering "the promised land," according to a relative of one who went.

A close relative of 71-year-old Marshall Farris from San Francisco said Farris "was under some kind of hypnosis. He just picked up and left his wife of 40 years — and never talked to her again."

But the relative tells of stories of rehearsed suicides and faith healings designed to make Jones at least appear to have total control over his community.

Jones told his disciples that trouble

was always imminent, and that they should be prepared to die "for socialism" rather than submit to insurgents.

According to former cult member Tim Stoen, Jones frequently put his congregation through tests. "He would pass around a brown liquid," Stoen said in a West Coast television interview telecast yesterday, "and tell everyone to drink it. After they drank it, he would tell them they would die in about an hour. Meanwhile, he would ask them to stand up one by one and tell the group why they were proud and honored to die for socialism."

Then, after an hour went by, Stoen added, Jones would tell his followers that they would not die, and he had just conducted a test of their loyalty.

"There was constant talk of death," another former resident of Jonestown

Suicide, Ex-Members Say

in Guyana, Deborah Layton Blakey, said yesterday. "In Jonestown the concept of mass suicide for socialism arose. Because our lives were so wretched anyway, and because we were so afraid to contradict Rev. Jones, the concept was not challenged."

Jones had something for everyone to fear. For blacks, it was the eventual rise of a Nazi-like state that would destroy all blacks. For his white followers, Jones would keep them in line with tales of a fabricated Central Intelligence Agency hit list they were supposedly on for their involvement with his movement.

At Jonestown, Jones convinced his followers that they were in constant danger of being captured and tortured by mercenaries.

There would be frequent nighttime drills, complete with "blaring sirens," according to Blakey. People would be told they were surrounded by mercenaries, and thus should prepare to die bravely.

In other tests, small children were pushed underwater until they almost died. "You could hear the child screaming all the way there and back ... 'I'm sorry, father. I'm sorry, father,'" Blakey said. "If he doesn't scream loud enough how sorry he is, then he'll (Jones) send the child back down."

Last weekend, no one had to be sent back down.

Washington Post special correspondent Marshall Kilduff contributed to this article.



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